



Psalm 13

# HOW LONG DO I HAVE TO WRESTLE WITH SORROW?

*We know that men in adversity give way to discontent, and look around them, first to one quarter, and then to another, in search of remedies. Especially, upon seeing that they are destitute of all resources, they torment themselves greatly, and are distracted by a multitude of thoughts; and in great dangers, anxiety and fear compel them to change their purposes from time to time, when they do not find any plan upon which they can fix with certainty. David, therefore, complains, that while thinking of different methods of obtaining relief, and deliberating with himself now in one way, and now in another, he is exhausted to no purpose with the multitude of suggestions which pass through his mind; and by joining to this complaint the sorrow which he felt daily, he points out the source of this disquietude. ...When sorrow seizes upon the hearts of men, its miserable victims are violently agitated within, and they find it more tolerable to torment themselves without obtaining relief, than to endure their afflictions with composed and tranquil minds.*

—John Calvin (1509-64)

An overview of the themes of the five books of the Psalms:

- Psalms 1-41: Opposition to God’s Anointed King
- Psalms 42-72: Communication to the Nations
- Psalms 73-89: Devastation and Despair of God’s People
- Psalms 90-106: Faith in God’s Sovereign Kingship
- Psalms 107-150: Consummation and Celebration!

Psalm 13 is a classic lament psalm. It begins with an intense struggle and an overwhelming sorrow, moves to passionate prayer, and ends with a declaration of trust and praise. The circumstances which led to this experience in David’s life are unknown but it may reflect the time when he was running for his life from King Saul (1 Sam. 21-31).

## THE \_\_\_\_\_ PROBLEM (13:1-2)

In this particular case, it is not the reality of the struggle that overwhelms David but the seeming unending duration of it.

*How long will You forget me?*

*How long will You hide Your face?*

*How long shall I keep wrestling with ways to get out of this mess, with no success, followed by daily sorrow and discouragement?*

*How long shall my enemy triumph over me?*

How long, O LORD, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_?

*The hymn as it were advances in waves that are constantly decreasing in length, until at last it is only agitated with joy, and becomes calm as the sea when smooth as a mirror.*

—Franz Delitzsch (1813-90)

*It is not under the sharpest, but the longest trials, that we are most in danger of fainting. When Job was accosted with evil tidings in quick succession, he bore it with becoming fortitude; but when he could see no end to his troubles, he sunk under them.*

—Andrew Fuller (1754-1815)

*“How long must I take counsel within myself?” refers to his numerous but futile attempts to resolve the situation. ...This was daily, there was no letup. Plan after plan failed and gave way to more grief.*

—Allen P. Ross

*A human being can survive almost anything, as long as she sees the end in sight. But depression is so insidious, and it compounds daily, that it’s impossible to ever see the end.*

—Elizabeth Wurtzel

## THE \_\_\_\_\_ PRAYER (13:3-4)

David had certainly prayed for relief on many occasions. Reaching a point of exasperation, He cries out to the LORD (cf. 2 Cor. 12:7-10):

1. \_\_\_\_\_!
2. \_\_\_\_\_!
3. Give \_\_\_\_\_ to my eyes! (cf. Ps. 19:8; 1 Sam. 14:27)

David gives two reasons for his prayer:

1. Lest I \_\_\_\_\_ in the midst of my overwhelming sorrow.
2. Lest my enemy and my foes arrogantly boast that their cause will prevail and that my faith in You is in vain.

## THE \_\_\_\_\_ PRAISE (13:5-6).

David finds strength, encouragement, endurance, and joy, in the midst of his difficulty, by determining to do three things:

- **T** \_\_\_\_\_ in God's *chesed* love (cf. Ex. 34:6-7; Deut. 7:9; 2 Chron. 5:13; 7:3; Ezra 3:11; Ps. 23:6; 33:5; 36:5; 51:1; 63:3; 86:15; 89:14; 100:5; 103:4; 106:1; 107; 118; 136; Lam. 3:22-23).
- **R** \_\_\_\_\_ in His salvation (cf. Phil. 4:4; 1 Th. 5:16).
- **S** \_\_\_\_\_ to the Lord because of His goodness (cf. Ps. 95; 96; 100; 104:33; Eph. 5:18-21; Col. 3:16; Rev. 5:9-14).

### Discussion Questions:

- Describe a difficult or dark time in your life. What made this time so difficult? What helped you get through this time?
- What encourages you the most about God's *chesed* love?
- What are three things that you can give praise and thanks for?
- What hymn(s) or praise song(s) have encouraged you the most? Why? What message do they speak to your heart and mind?

*If you look at the world, you'll be distressed. If you look within, you'll be depressed. If you look at God, you'll be at rest.*

—Corrie ten Boom

*Lighten my eyes: that is, let the eye of my faith be clear, that I may see my God in the dark; ...let the eye of my understanding be illuminated to see the right way. Perhaps, too, here is an allusion to that cheering of the spirits... called the enlightening of the eyes because it causes the face to brighten and the eyes to sparkle.* —Charles H. Spurgeon

*The point is that David is a faithful believer in the LORD. The triumph of his enemies over him would be hailed by them as a triumph over David and his faith.*

—Allen P. Ross

**Mercy.** Hebrew, *chesed*, “zeal toward someone, love, kindness, grace, favor, mercy” (Gesenius). Used 246x in the OT, mostly in Psalms, it is strongly relational.

**Hesed** is not only the most important theme of the Torah, it is the theme of everything; all of Torah and of Creation flows from the value of **hesed**.

—Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz

*The vast range of **hesed** is made evident by the staggering number of English words translators employ in a frustrated effort to render it. The KJV uses fourteen different words. It even borrows an elegant new word from Miles Coverdale's 1535 translation: “loving-kindness.” ...*

**Hesed:** *When the person from whom I have a right to expect nothing gives me everything.*

—Michael Card